

Waving Goodbye by orphan_account

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Summary:

Will's leaving for college, and a few individuals are a little broken up about it - one in particular.

Waving Goodbye

Sunday, August 13th, 1989

“Do you have to go?” Mike complained. Will was sat cross-legged on his bedroom floor, writing ‘kitchen’ in Sharpie on a large cardboard box. Will paused, apparently considering his question.

“Do I have to go to college..?” He tapped the Sharpie on his lip thoughtfully. Mike threw one of his pillows at him, missing entirely and knocking a pot of pencils off his desk.

“You know what I mean, asshole.”

“I actually don’t, and it’s always nice when we use pet names, sweetie.” Will set aside the box and started writing ‘art stuff’ on another. Mike, feeling guilty, got up off the bed and righted the pot and its pencils.

“I mean, why do you have to go so soon? Your course doesn’t start for another three weeks.” His task complete, he sat down next to his boyfriend. “What’s this box for?”

“Clothes. And I don’t *have* to go now, but I want to. I want to settle in and make friends before I start. I’m...” he paused, apparently hesitant. Mike frowned.

“What, Will?” He took the opportunity to take Will’s hand in his own. Will sighed.

“I’m terrified, Mike. I’ve never been away from home for this long, I’ve only ever lived in Hawkins, and... I’m really worried everyone is... is going to be better than me.”

“Bullshit. No one’s better than you.” Mike said promptly, and Will smiled fondly.

“Now who’s talking bullshit? But seriously though, Mike, I know you think I’m good but everyone else is too. And besides, I bet everyone

else can actually afford to go,” he added with a twinge of bitterness in his voice. Mike squirmed uncomfortably inside; he hated that his family was so much richer than Will’s.

“It doesn’t matter,” he said firmly, in spite of his misgivings. “A scholarship is worth just as much as a set of fees. If anything it’s worth more – it shows you’ve actually earned your place there, right?” Will squeezed his hand and smiled, genuinely this time.

“I guess. Come on, maybe you could actually help me pack instead of taking the stuff out of the boxes.” Mike opened his mouth to protest but Will cut him off. “Don’t deny it, mister, I saw you. Put it all back, and in the right boxes if you know what’s good for you.”

“Yes sir,” said Mike, saluting, as Will picked up the pillow and hit him with it.

Packing took up most of the week, and different members of the Party visited to help Will out between their work shifts. On Monday morning, while Mike, Will and El were still in their pyjamas, Joyce opened the door at nine on the dot to find Max standing there with numerous extra boxes she had “found”, in her words. On Tuesday morning Lucas and Dustin arrived together with a backpack full of various snacks to sustain them, although Will, Mike and Lucas found that their progress was considerably faster after Dustin left for his afternoon shift at the Radio Shack. On Wednesday it was just Will and El at home, and the two made short work of packing up Will’s extensive art supplies into one box, to Joyce’s astonishment. On Thursday Max arrived again; she went through Will’s desk drawers with a plastic trash bag and ruthlessly threw in it everything that she decided Will no longer needed – old notes and bad sketches, broken toys and movie tickets, oblivious to the more sentimental Mike’s protests. Jonathan had Friday off work, so joined Will and Mike in trying to compact his entire wardrobe into the last two boxes, until Joyce returned from work, tutted at their combined incompetence and showed them how to do it. On Saturday, Mike, Lucas, El and Hopper pitched in to help Will load up his car, squeezing everything except Will’s backpack into the rear seats and trunk, until with a peculiar finality, Will closed the trunk and locked it.

On Sunday only Mike appeared at the front door with only a small, sad smile to offer Joyce.

“Honestly, there’s not much left to do,” said Will as he led Mike into the bedroom. It was hardly recognisable as Will’s room: his posters, his drawings, his photographs from Jonathan, his track medals, everything was gone. The room looked almost skeletal. Joyce followed them in and gazed around, before turning and leaving quickly, stifling a sob on the way out.

“Is she okay?” Mike said softly. Will shrugged glumly.

“She doesn’t want me to go, obviously. But honestly, she’s not helping herself. She keeps playing that sad ABBA song.”

“What?”

“I don’t know, they wrote a song about their daughter leaving home, I think,” Will said, absently wiping some dust off his dresser. “Hopper bought her the album on cassette and she keeps playing that song whenever she’s feeling sad.”

“Does it make her feel better?” Mike asked.

“No, but she does it anyway.” Will looked down as he traced the lines on the carpet with his toe. “I’m only in the next state over.”

“It’s a long way from Chicago,” said Mike quietly, and Will looked up. Mike bit his lip. *He would not cry. He’d promised himself.* Will slipped his arms round Mike and rested his cheek on his chest. He felt Mike sigh and buried his face in his shirt as he felt his eyes begin to blur.

“I’m going to miss you so much,” he muttered, and Mike nodded and mumbled a similar response. “I love you,” he added, looking up at him, and saw that Mike was struggling to hold it together as well.

“I love you too,” he whispered, as he leaned down to kiss him.

The rest of their day seemed to drag, although neither Will nor Mike was sure if that was a good thing or not. They played Scrabble with El after lunch, before heading out into the woods for one final venture into Castle Byers. It was a tight fit these days, so they sat outside and leaned against it instead. They were quiet for most of the time – unusually for them, they found that they weren't quite sure what to say to each other. They headed back when Will started to shiver; Lucas, Max and Dustin popped round to say goodbye and give Will a hug. All were apologetic but none could stay for various reasons. Even El was out with Hopper, leaving Will, Mike, Jonathan and Joyce together. It was not by any means the most cheerful of evenings, as everyone was upset and slightly on edge. By the time he went to bed, Will was ready to curl up into a ball and cry. He climbed into his bed, having set Mike up to sleep on the sofa and drew his knees up to his chest. Suddenly he jumped as his door opened, and twisted his head around so fast he gave himself cramp.

“What the hell are you doing?” he hissed as he sat up. “You scared the shit out of me!”

“Sorry,” Mike whispered, coming over and sitting on the bed. “I just wanted to make sure you were okay.”

“Fucking spectacular,” he spat. Mike blinked in surprise; that was strong language for him. Will sighed. “I’m sorry,” he murmured, lying back down again. Mike quickly made up his mind and slipped under the covers with him, to Will’s surprise. *This is new*. He shuffled over a little and rolled onto his side to face Mike, running a hand through Mike’s unkempt curls, brushing them out of his eyes. “Do me a favour and get a haircut before I see you again?” Mike opened his mouth in mock offence but couldn’t keep it up, so grinned.

“Says you, Mr Bowl Cut,” he shot back.

“That was five years ago,” he said, laughing softly. He gazed at Mike for a moment longer until his eyes started to droop. “I do love you,” he whispered, moments away from sleep.

The morning whizzed past. Before Mike knew what was going on

they'd got up, got dressed and eaten breakfast, and Will was hugging his mother, Jonathan, El and Hopper goodbye. Mike stood at a distance, not wanting to intrude on their little family, until presently, Will said something to them and they obediently went indoors. Mike walked over to Will a little cautiously.

"I just asked them to give us a couple of minutes," Will said. Mike nodded, once again at a loss for words. "You'll come and see me, right?"

"Course, if you come and see me too." Will smiled at that.

"We'll be back for Thanksgiving, of course."

"And Christmas," added Mike.

"And spring break."

"And then boom, it's summer again."

"I'll still miss you," said Will softly, as Mike pulled him into a hug, before kissing him with everything he had. And just for a moment, everything was perfect. But then Will was getting in the car and starting the engine, and his family were back, and the car was pulling away. El appeared at his side and touched his arm gently, and he smiled weakly down at her. The car's gears groaned, and Mike looked up again, watching him go with a dull ache in his stomach, and raised a hand in farewell.